

Annie Jane Wride Harris

Annie Jane Wride
1864-1922
A biographical sketch
by
W. Thoms Wride, a grand-nephew

Annie Jane Wride was born April 2, 1864. Seventeen years after Brigham Young and the first company of pioneers arrived in the valley of the Great Salt Lake. Annie was the second child of Barry and Hannah Selman Wride of Payson, Utah County, Utah. The year 1864 was a busy year in Payson with many new pioneers moving into the valley—mostly from Europe. There was still some turmoil in the surrounding communities with Indian unrest, raids and thievery.

Annie was welcomed into the family by older brother Lewis, who was a year and a half old at the time. She was followed by Maggie about five years later, then Hannah followed a couple of years after that; then George who joined the family three years after Hannah. By the time her youngest sister, Minnie Nettie was born, Annie was fifteen years old—(a teenager, a species later to be dreaded). Francis was born two and a half years after Minnie Nettie, but didn't live to his second birthday, having died from an accident in the home.

In 1877 the children of the family enjoyed their new little sister and helped their mother a great deal with the household chores as well as caring for that new arrival, whom the parents named, Minnie Nettie. The Wride home was one of learning, working and having fun in an atmosphere of love. During the summer months the children had chores around the house, yard, fields and orchards. Annie was at the age where she enjoyed the opportunities of gathering with the other girls her age and flirting with the boys after church meetings and at other gatherings in the community. Sundays were strictly days of worship and rest, however the children did manage to get some play time and Annie was able to visit with her friends and occasionally go their homes to extend their time together. The children looked forward to the summer holidays to participate in and watch the parades and other events at the city park and community. The band concerts on warm summer evenings were also fun to attend. Winter was also a fun time for the children with a grand sleigh riding hill just east of their home, which was located on the corner of Fifth East and Utah Avenue, at the west base of the hill where the Peteetneet School was later built. The seclusion that winter brought with long evenings, cold days and confinement to the comforts of a warm home provided the family time to be together and Annie enjoyed reading to and teaching the younger children. She often thought it would fun to be a school teacher when she was older.

Barry Wride, Annie's father, was a prominent citizen of Payson holding various

political positions over the years, as well as many years on the school board. His interest in a good educational opportunity for the young people of the community held him in this position longer than most others of his peers.

Annie's mother taught her, and the other sisters to sew, knit, quilt, cook, launder and all the common household chores of the times. Most of their clothes were made at home and with their garden and farm the family was provided with the necessities of life.

May 2, 1872 was an important day in the life of young Annie Wride—she was baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She felt important and enjoyed the warm feeling of the spirit which she was blessed with. She had renewed interest and determination to help her parents, obey the teachings of the Church and the Gospel.

She continued to grow in knowledge as a school girl and enjoyed the companionship of other girls in the neighborhood and community, as well as the strength that comes from wonderful lessons learned in the home from loving parents and siblings. There were also relatives close by to associate with and particularly assist at times. Annie and sister Maggie often went around the corner and helped care for Grandma Selman. Annie progressed into womanhood through her experiences at home, school, church and community she completed her secondary education at Payson High School.

After school had ended for the summer Annie was happy to be finished with High School, but her thoughts soon turned to preparing for college and accumulating what money she could earn at various jobs in and out of her home. She enjoyed teaching children and looked forward to when she could be a school teacher. By the time the community was celebrating Pioneer Days in 1881 there were just a few weeks remaining to prepare for her move to Provo for college. As the Fall term started at Brigham Young Academy on August 12, Annie was all registered and had arranged to stay at the home of Evan Wride in Provo. Evan was her father's cousin whom he and uncle J.D. Rees had baptized at Merthyr Tydfil, Wales on Sunday March 15, 1868, while Barry was on his mission.

Annie enjoyed the school-year and the hospitality of the Evan Wride family. She studied hard and read much preparing each day for her class work. She came to love the great atmosphere of education backed by Gospel principles which Karl G. Maeser insisted must exist in the classroom as well throughout all aspects of the Academy. It was an exciting time for Annie to meet others her age with similar backgrounds who had come from many Utah communities and some from Idaho. There were many

social activities on campus and in the community that she participated in. With the classes being held in a building on west Center Street the students had easy access to the stores and facilities in downtown Provo including the trolley service. At the conclusion of that first school-year, on June 16, 1882, she returned to her home in Payson.

Annie's mother was very happy to have her home—due to the loss of two children during the past year Hannah was still grieving and coping with a heavy heart. Annie was a good help around the house and with the younger children. George was eight and Minnie Nettie was five years old. Over the summer months Annie had much to tell her mother about the friends she made at the Academy and the activities she had enjoyed, along with some of the challenges.

The summer of 1882 soon came to a close and Annie was off again to complete her studies at the BY Academy in Provo, once again enjoying the hospitality of Evan Wride and his family. It was exciting to renew acquaintances from the previous school year, make new friends and share experiences from the summer's activities.

In June 1883 Annie graduated from Brigham Young Academy having completed her studies in the Normal School, qualified to be a school teacher. She was fortunate to have her father on the School Board. This enabled her to be able to teach in and around Payson. A new Central School House was under construction and teachers salaries had just been raised to \$50 per month. The following school year tuition had been set with a Registration fee of \$1.75 per student; Second and Third grade Readers were \$1.50 per student; Fourth \$1.75 and Fifth \$2.00.

It is evident that Barry Wride was acquainted with Dennison Emer Harris, based on the following statement in the autobiography of Eunice Polly Stewart Harris, his first wife:

“The first of September [1884] my husband entered the B.Y. Academy, and a month later I joined him with my two children. We spent a busy, though a happy and pleasant winter. I was tied quite closely at home, but I had the companionship of my husband and my babies and I was contented.”

“At the close of the school year, my husband accepted the position of Principal of the Payson City schools for the coming year. We went to Benjamin to visit my parents and my husband started to Monroe [to visit his parents]. The day after he left a telegram came [calling] him to the bedside of his father who was very ill with pneumonia. On June 6th 1885, his father passed away. After Bishop Harris's wife died he lived a widower for twelve years. In 1883 he married Maria Messerli and she had a daughter born a week

after her husband's death. He [Dennison's father] filled the place of both father and mother to his children to a remarkable degree, bestowing the tenderness of a mother upon them. I do not think a man was ever more beloved by his children or held in higher esteem than was this wise and good man."

"There is an old saying, "Trouble never comes 'single-handed' and in our case it was true. On the 22nd of the same month my father was returning from Payson. Just as he reached home a terrific hail storm, accompanied by loud thunder, struck the place. He backed the carriage up close to the end of the home just as a terrific bolt of lightning struck the house. As the bolt struck the place it divided part of it, wrecking the place and part of it struck my father as he sat in his carriage, killing him instantly. My husband and I [were] called to mourn the death of our fathers just sixteen days apart."

"We rented a house in Payson and began keeping house the last of June. April 9, 1886, I was again a mother—my third son whom we named Leo Lott. My children were coming close together, but my health was good and I was strong. There they were welcome and we were thankful for them; we both wanted a large family."

"I was always deeply spiritual, and every principle of our religion appealed to me. I seemed to have been born with a testimony of its divinity and love for spiritual things."

"My parents were both spiritual, sincere, God-fearing-God loving people, and they instilled within my heart a love for every principle of the gospel and a desire to live up to its teachings."

"Plural marriage was then practiced by our people, although the persecution against it, by the so-called "Liberal" part was very bitter, and men were sent to prison daily for practicing it. My husband and I both believed this principle and both desired to practice it. We believed that everyone has the right to receive inspiration for his own guidance. We both felt within our very souls that the time had come when it was our duty to obey that principle no matter what result might follow. The call had come and we must obey it. I am thankful I felt it as strongly as he did, otherwise, when the test came, I might have faltered."

"I was thankful to my Heavenly Father for a husband who had the courage and strength of character to do what his conscience bade him."

"July 28, 1886, my husband married Annie Jane Wride, as a plural wife, in the Logan Temple. I want to bear my testimony to my children, my grandchildren, and my great grandchildren that I know to the very depths of my being that this order of marriage is true and it was revealed from God, and I thank my Heavenly Father for this testimony. Let me say to you, as my mother said to her children: 'Never say you do not believe it, nor try to tear it

down, for it is one of the principles of our revealed gospel, and is divine, as are the other principles . Rather say you do not understand it’.”

It is quite likely that in the fall of 1885 when Dennison Emer Harris began his position as “Principal of the Payson City Schools” he became acquainted with the lovely Annie Jane Wride. Since both Dennison and Eunice had a common interest and inclination to enter the polygamous lifestyle his mind must have been drawn to thoughts of this bright young teacher who was single. In the pursuing months he must have had many conversations with Eunice along with much praying, not to mention a great deal of contemplations concerning the political considerations of working out such a sensitive issue with his “school board boss.” All things must have fallen in to place for Dennison, Eunice, Annie Jane, Barry and Hannah for the marriage to have taken place.

This was a difficult time for those attempting to live the eternal order of plural wives because the governmental officials were bound to bring this practice to a close. There were many in any community who felt justified in reporting any polygamous activity to the federal marshals and their agents. Those who continued to practice this “higher law” did so in as much secrecy as possible, confiding only in trusted family members. It appears that Annie was living in the Wasatch County community of Charleston, and possibly spending some time at Barry Wride’s home in Payson while Dennison Emer was presiding over the North Eastern States Mission from late in 1887 to July 1889.

He developed some health problems and was released from his mission after about a year and a half. On his return from the mission field Dennison was traveling under the assumed name of Mr. Johnson, disguised as a Catholic Priest. When he arrived at Ogden he stayed in or near that community, with friends and relatives and regained his health and strength. At that time he met with the new president, John E. Booth of Provo who succeeded him in the mission they then called Northern States Mission. A few days later he was visited by Eunice and her four sons. As painful as it was, he was still maintaining the secret identity of Brother Johnson to his four sons. After their two-week visit they parted not knowing when or where they would meet again. Two days later, July 29, 1889 he had a visit with Apostle F.D. Richards. He gave some good points on Mexico and general advice. Two days later he reported the labors of his mission to the Presidency of the Church.

From his diary: “Aug 3. Bidding adieu to Harrisville, I procured a ticket at Ogden for Deming, New Mexico, price, 2nd, \$40. At Springville my dear wife, Annie, and our little son now two years, four months old nearly, got on the train, but not on the same car with me. Although I was disguised somewhat, all including Annie’s mother,

brother, and brother, Hyrum, readily recognized me, yet we all thought prudent not to talk any or even shake hands. This was very hard for me and I came near running the risk of being recognized by conversing with them. Aug. 4 [1889]. We arrived at La Janta where we remained over night waiting on [for] our train going to Deming. Arrived at Deming on the 6th. ...We left Deming on the 14th arriving at [Colonial] Diaz, Chihuahua, Mexico on the 18th. Diaz is strictly a Mormon town of some 40 families built on Church or company land in the central part of a large beautiful valley at least 12 miles wide.”

Dennison and Annie immediately began teaching school there in the Colony (Sept. 16), having been sought out by the local Church authorities. They had selected two building lots close to the one room school house and soon began building two homes. In November Eunice and her four sons joined them. In the spring Annie had her second child born on April 24, 1890, and they named him Barry Wride Harris in honor of Annie’s father. By the time school was ready to begin in the fall of 1890 the two families had moved to Colonia Juarez, which was closer to the Sierra Madre Mountains, where Dennison preferred to live. Both Dennison and Annie continued to teach school, while Eunice maintained the home. The following school year they changed places and both seemed to enjoy the change.

Shortly after the move to Juarez, Eunice gave birth to her first daughter on September 1, 1890. They named her Lulu Eunice and the mother was thrilled to finally have a daughter. 1892 was a banner year in which both mothers gave birth, with the first being Annie on February 22 and Eunice near the end of the year on December 28. Annie had a son whom they named Jesse Martin and Eunice also had a boy who they named Marion Luther.

Eunice next wrote in her autobiography, “February 21, 1893, our first great sorrow came into our life when our bright, beautiful little daughter was snatched away from us by death, just when she was developing so many interesting and charming traits. There was an epidemic of diphtheria in the neighborhood and she fell victim. She was two and one-half years old. The circumstances attending her death and burial seemed almost more than we could bear, and it is too sad to talk about or write about, even now [1932]. She was a precious child. Trouble does not always come single-handed, for on March 2nd before we were out of quarantine, Annie’s baby, little Jesse Martin, was called by the same dreadful disease.” Undaunted by the sorrowful experiences of losing children the families continued to grow with the birth of Annie’s first daughter. Annie Isura Harris was born on August 28, 1893.

The colonies were very much in the frontier of civilization and it took the hard work of all the family members to make a livelihood. At this time there were still many

Indians in the area and some would cross the border in their trouble making episodes. In the summer of 1894 it was reported that a renegade band from the Tomache Tribe had robbed the custom house at Columbus, on the international border, and were headed directly for the colonies. This caused much commotion as the Saints prepared for a confrontation which eventually did not materialize. Other highlights of the year were the moving to Juarez of Dennison's brothers and their families. Hyrum, the attorney came to study Mexican law and Martin came to make his home there. Also, on October 16, 1864 another son was born to Eunice, who was named Karl, in honor of Karl G. Maeser—founder of Brigham Young Academy. This distinguished educator came to Juarez this year to organize the Church School System in the area with the Juarez Stake Academy in that community and seminaries in the other colonies. From April through July Annie went home to Payson for a visit.

This was also the year that Dennison and two of his friends, Joseph C. Bentley and Anson B. Call, entered into a partnership arrangement for the operation of various enterprises in Juarez and Dublan. In Juarez Bentley had pasture and cattle, some farming land and a cannery. He also operated a store in Dublan. Call had a large farm in Dublan. Whenever Dennison was not at the school he could be found helping out at the farms, ranches or the store.

In 1895 Anson Call went to serve a mission to Great Britain and at the end of the school year Dennison gave up teaching and went to run the farm in Dublan. Annie and Eunice took turns staying in Dublan. On March 20, 1895 Annie gave birth to another boy whom they named George Lewis, after Annie's two brothers. At the end of the summer Sister Call returned from an extended visit in Utah and at that time she moved into Annie's home in Juarez and Annie moved her belongings into the Call's farm house in Dublan.

On February 23, 1897 the home of Eunice was blessed with a new daughter who took the place as the only daughter in their home. The whole family was thrilled and the father selected the name of Ireta. Six weeks later, about the first week of April, Annie gave birth to a still born girl they named Jennie. This caused much sadness in the whole family. During the summer Brother Call returned from his mission and the Harrises moved back to Juarez. Soon after that the Juarez Ward was reorganized with Joseph C. Bentley becoming bishop. Dennison was called to serve as second counsellor. The two were so involved in church work that they dissolved their partnership with Anson Call and moved their store business to Juarez. Dennison took over the management of the store and used one of his boys to help.

On April 28, 1898 another daughter was born to Annie, whom they named Edna.